

Special Affects

Compositing Images in the Bodies of Butoh

Michael Hornblow

Submitted in accordance with the
regulations for Master of Arts Thesis

University of Technology, Sydney

2004

Certificate of Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. J. ...', written over a horizontal line.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to my supervisors, Douglas Khan and Cathryn Vasseleu for their incredible patience and invaluable comments – Douglas during the formative phase of the research, and Cathryn for the writing and submission stages later on. I would also like to acknowledge my proofers for their corrections and suggestions (Stephen Gapps, Margaret Mahew, Andrew Hornblow and Stevie Bee). My utmost gratitude goes to the cast and crew of my short film, *pneu babel* (see credits on DVD, inside back cover), as well as my butoh teachers – in particular Min Tanaka, Kazuo and Yoshito Ohno, *Gekidan Kaitaisha*, Tony Yap and Yumi Umiumare. I would also like to acknowledge Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Antonin Artaud, and Tatsumi Hijikata, for inspiring this research.

Above all, I am forever indebted to my friends and family, in particular my martial-arts teacher, friend and mentor John Michelis, my confidant and ‘wing-man’ James Lygo, my parents Andrew and Daphne Hornblow for their tireless support and encouragement, my dear brother Douglas, and my fellow traveler in heart Mariela Laratro.

Abstract

This thesis examines how the relationship between '*the body*' and '*the image*' may be understood within the Japanese dance movement called *butoh*. The aim of the thesis is twofold – to investigate what it means to construct a body specific to *butoh*, and to consider how the image in *butoh* may be seen to affect this body. In the first instance, I examine how the materiality of the *butoh-body* constrains or delimits its expressive capacity. In the second instance, I investigate how the materiality of the *butoh-image* performs a generative function, to stretch the bounds of this body and the limits of its expression.

As far as theorising the *butoh-body* is concerned, what interests me are the points of confluence that may be explored through the materialist philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. I seek to demonstrate how the ideas of Tatsumi Hijikata (*butoh*'s co-founder) may be discussed through the writing of Antonin Artaud, whose approach to the body influenced both Hijikata and the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. As far as the *butoh-image* is concerned, I seek to show how Deleuze's *cinéphilosophy* may also inform an understanding of Hijikata's choreographic method of working with images, called *butoh-fu*. Here, I develop a conceptual model with which to probe the materiality of the *butoh-image* and the cinematic qualities of the *butoh-body*.

This twofold approach stems from my own art practice as a filmmaker and performer. The initial impetus for the research emerged through an intensive period of *butoh* dance training, as well as the production of a short film. This film experiments with a dynamic interaction of performers, sculptural elements, plus digital and optical effects. In the thesis, I use the theory of complex systems and the ideas of Deleuze, Guattari, Hijikata and Artaud, to discuss how the film may be imagined as a 'systemic narrative'. This approach explores the interactions between the filmic elements, to produce the narrative as an ongoing process of construction.

This thesis is a work in progress towards two outcomes. The first of these is a *diagrammatic* model for *butoh* dance notation, to provide a graphic template for Hijikata's choreographic method. The second is a proposed video-installation, which may further implement the systemic narrative with a technical configuration that corresponds to the diagrammatic model. Through this research, I seek to develop my own praxis, which investigates a systemic approach to the embodiment of the image.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1.	Tatsumi Hijikata choreographing Kohichi Tamano (in Waguri and Kohzensha, 1998).	104
Figure 2.	Tatsumi Hijikata, <i>Rebellion of the Body</i> , 1969 (in Waguri and Kohzensha, 1998).	104
Figure 3.	Tatsumi Hijikata, <i>Rebellion of the Body</i> , 1969 (in Waguri and Kohzensha, 1998).	104
Figures 4 – 7.	Michael Hornblow, video performance, <i>Doujunkai Die</i> , January 2003.	105
Figures 8 – 11.	Michael Hornblow, Shinjuku / Kabuki-cho street performance, December 2002 / January 2003.	106
Figure 12.	Constant Nieuwenhuys, <i>New Babylon</i> (in Sadler, 1998).	107
Figure 13.	Bruegal the Elder, <i>The Tower of Babel</i> (in Steiner, 1975).	107
Figure 14.	Gerhardt Richter, <i>Abstraktes Bild</i> , 1995 (in Obrist, 1996).	107

Contents

Introduction

i.	<i>A brief description of butoh</i>	1
ii.	<i>Aims, methods and review</i>	3
iii.	<i>Chapter summaries</i>	8

Chapter 1.

The butoh-sei of a butoh-bwo	13
A generative limit	
i.	<i>The limit of cruelty</i> 14
ii.	<i>The root of suffering</i> 15
iii.	<i>Immanence and difference</i> 16
iv.	<i>Emptiness is standing</i> 18
The actual and the virtual	
i.	<i>Shadows in the event</i> 20
ii.	<i>Doubling the real</i> 22
iii.	<i>Shades of a dark luminosity</i> 24
iv.	<i>The crack in the surface</i> 25
Harnessing the event	
i.	<i>Killing the body</i> 27
ii.	<i>Death is living</i> 30
iii.	<i>A whirlwind gobbling pain</i> 32
iv.	<i>The impersonality of an impoverished dead-body</i> 34
A conceptual model	
i.	<i>Facets of the FACE</i> 36

Chapter 2.

The biociné of butoh-fu.	40
The image and language	
i. <i>Catching the sense</i>	41
ii. <i>The metaplastic membrane</i>	44
Percepts and affects	
i. <i>The skin of a hitogata</i>	45
ii. <i>Sensations and tactile particles</i>	49
iii. <i>Clay-body</i>	52
Butoh and Cinephilosophy	54
i. <i>Particles of proprioception</i>	55
ii. <i>Nerve circuits</i>	57
iii. <i>The forgotten landscape</i>	60
iv. <i>A sense of crisis</i>	62
Time and thought	
i. <i>Time dancing</i>	64
ii. <i>The dark crystal</i>	67
iii. <i>The thinking body</i>	69

Chapter 3.

<i>pneu babel</i> as generative system	73
Systemic narrative	
i. <i>The premises of an open set</i>	75
ii. <i>The Hero Chair</i>	77
iii. <i>Vector-particles and wave-forms</i>	78
iv. <i>Warp and woof</i>	81
v. <i>The settler-phantasm</i>	82
vi. <i>Ghosts of the pneu</i>	84

Butoh-fu schema	
<i>i. Towards a generative interFACE</i>	87
<i>ii. Systemic features:</i>	
<i>a. Vectorscope</i>	88
<i>b. Transforms</i>	91
<i>c. Transfer modes</i>	93
Video-installation	94
<i>i. Platform and tableau</i>	94
<i>ii. Phantasmagorical pandemonium</i>	96
<i>iii. Destroying the tower</i>	97
<i>iv. pneu babel</i>	99
Conclusions	100
Butoh Dance Workshops	103
Illustrations	104
Glossary	108
Appendices	
Conceptual models	123
Butoh-fu	125
The Ohno Studio	129
Bibliography	131
DVD (see inside back cover)	“ <i>pneu babel</i> ” (8 minutes duration)